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About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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A Beacon for Extremists: The Ansar al-Mujahideen Web Forum

By Evan Kohlmann



DURING THE LAST DECADE, a virtual revolution has quietly taken place in the world of international terrorism. The traditional hubs of logistical activity—radical mosques, bookstores and guesthouses—have been strictly monitored by law enforcement and intelligence agencies. As a result, in a strategy pioneered by eager cyber-savvy youth such as London resident Younis Tsouli (known as “Irhabi 007”),¹ aspiring

terrorists have taken to the internet in force, employing jihadist-themed social networking forums as a new base for propaganda, communication, and even recruitment. It was only in retrospect, years after this phenomenon began, that governments recognized the degree to which al-Qa`ida's leadership was aware of the existence of these social networking forums—and the extent of their interest in using them to harness the power of the web.

¹ In July 2007, Younis Tsouli and two co-defendants pled guilty to charges filed by British prosecutors accusing them of “inciting another person to commit an act of terrorism wholly or partly outside the UK contrary to Section 59(1) Terrorism Act 2000.” The charges stemmed from, among other activities, Tsouli's high-profile online role as the internet media coordinator for al-Qa`ida in Iraq. Part of this mission included using web social networking forums to help link up prospective jihadist recruits with al-Qa`ida contacts based in Damascus, Syria. For more, see “Three Men Admit to Using Internet to Incite Terrorism in First British Case,” United Kingdom Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), press release, July 5, 2007.

Although official scrutiny initially focused on Arabic-language websites with clear connections to al-Qa`ida, recent events have forced a reappraisal of this relatively limited approach. Whether it is Fort Hood shooter Major Nidal Malik Hasan's passion for the English-language blog of Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi, or conversely the online ramblings of the failed Christmas Day airline bomber Umar Farouk

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Abdulmutallab,² it is increasingly second- and third-tier extremist social networking forums managed by unaffiliated fringe activists—many of them offering dedicated English-language chat rooms—that appear to play pivotal roles in the indoctrination and radicalization of some of today's most notorious aspiring terrorists. This is a significant shift that has yet to be fully understood, as it could herald in a new generation of English-speaking or Westernized violent extremists.

Indeed, while certain discussion forums receive substantial endorsements and patronage directly from al-Qa`ida, many others are the product of independent efforts by loyal, web-savvy grassroots supporters who simply possess an overflowing passion for Usama bin Ladin and the subculture of jihad. Occasionally, this self-selecting form of internet-based terrorism can become so significant as to arguably even rival that which has been blessed by al-Qa`ida itself. These websites may not rank at the top of the conventional online jihadist hierarchy, but understanding the methodology and mindset of the idealistic web entrepreneurs behind the forums has nonetheless become essential in countering a new wave of international terrorism—both the organized and disorganized variety.

This sobering lesson is clearly reflected in the brief yet meteoric rise of one contemporary jihadist discussion forum in particular: the Ansar al-Mujahideen website. The website began in 2008 as a rather low-frills, Arabic-language clone forum with questionable credibility and a membership of mostly silent observers. Today, however, the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum has blossomed into a prolific, multi-language enterprise with an enviable following of skilled and highly-motivated English-speaking members. These men and

women dedicate countless hours of their own personal time—often with little reward or acknowledgement—to translating and redistributing jihadist propaganda and instructional materials, promoting the mission of al-Qa`ida, and establishing new online sanctuaries for jihadist activists.

As a result of the tireless efforts of its administrators, in less than two full years of operation the Ansar al-Mujahideen Arabic-language forum has accumulated 3,784 registered users, 13,845 discussion threads, and nearly 57,000 individual message posts.³ Beyond these already impressive numbers, Ansar al-Mujahideen administrators enjoyed further viral success upon the launch of mirrored Ansar forums dedicated exclusively to English- and German-language users. Unveiled months after the Arabic parent site was already active and open for business, its English-language Ansar cousin has rapidly closed the distance, amassing nearly 15,000 threads and 60,000 individual message posts. As such, the multi-layered Ansar al-Mujahideen network has become a key beacon for lone wolf extremists originating from a wide array of communities, including Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe, and North America.

Yet, the somewhat amateurish origins of the Ansar al-Mujahideen network have also become an unwitting Achilles heel. During their path to success, the forum's administrators made a litany of costly software installation errors, allowing outsiders brief access to the website's user database. Along with various Internet Protocol (IP) addresses—and much heated invective and rhetoric—the data stored in the forum offers a clear picture of how Ansar al-Mujahideen was created, and what purpose it serves in the greater context of terrorist activity on the internet.

The Rise of the Ansar al-Mujahideen Forum

Created in 2008, Ansar al-Mujahideen was established by a group of “ordinary members” from the well-known al-Ekhlaas forum. In a private retort sent to an online critic of Ansar al-Mujahideen, the self-declared “Media Amir” of the forum, Abu Omar al-Maqdisi, explained

its creation. “I am one of those so-called ‘New Muslims,’” wrote Abu Omar al-Maqdisi.

For years of my life I was living in ignorance and God guided me so I gave myself to Him after I understood the meaning of how God graces and puts faith in someone's heart, and since I originally work in the media, I thought about starting some work for the victory of the mujahidin... All that we want is the glory of this religion, and to encourage the believers to fight, and to spend money and offer victorious words for the mujahidin... We were ordinary members at the al-Ekhlaas forum and we learned a lot from the brothers who took charge of jihadi media work before us—and it is only normal for us to start our own active campaign at the first chance we got. And that's what we did, so we established this site, and told everyone we knew from the al-Ekhlaas network about this forum... We went outside the usual jihadi media route, but we terrorize in the real world as much as we terrorize online, so whoever wishes to join is welcome, and those who don't should hold their tongues about us and go away. And although low in number, we are strong in determination, and anyone who joins us will realize that immediately.⁴

The ruffling of Abu Omar's feathers came amid a torrent of online gossip in late 2008 concerning the trustworthiness of the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum, and rumors that the al-Fajr Media Center—the official group responsible for media distribution and other online logistical tasks on behalf of al-Qa`ida—was questioning its legitimacy.⁵ Abu Omar haughtily rejected these charges and the perceived backstabbing by the “snobs” at al-Fajr: “None of us is more privileged than any other, except through his zeal for his religion and supporting the mujahidin. Our work serves as testament to our credibility.”⁶

2 Under the username “Farouk1986,” Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab posted scores of messages to at least one third-tier English-language Islamic forum, the “Gawaher Network,” in 2005 and 2006. The postings included expressions of sympathy for the Guantanamo Bay detainees, anger at the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, descriptions of travel to Yemen, and his lamentations about leading the life of a solitary bachelor. For details, see Philip Rucker and Julie Tate, “In Online Posts Apparently by Detroit Subject, Religious Ideals Collide,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 2009.

3 This information, drawn from www.as-ansar.com/vb/, was accurate as of February 2010.

4 This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=502.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

He admitted,

maybe some of my productions have some basic mistakes...but that doesn't mean I am on an untruthful path...We are located in al-Ansar room on PalTalk alongside the jihadi Shaykh Abu Abdulrahman, may Allah protect him, one of the commanders in Somalia—so why would he trust us and allow us to record and broadcast his interview? We also have brothers from the Islamic State of Iraq, Chechnya, and Dagestan.⁷

Abu Omar professed his growing “boredom” with online “work” and his desire “to join the battlefields to fight with my weapon, and with my camera and computer so I ask God to grace us. All I want now is a strong and solid media network operating at an elite level in order to terrorize our enemies and uncover the truth.”⁸ Abu Omar further scoffed:

Why have the brothers become scared of their own shadows? If you really perceive yourself to be in danger here [on the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum] according to what these brothers have told you, then don't come in here again...We don't need you or anyone else...just ask the brothers at the al-Tahadi forum to vouch for us...I say, if any of the brothers at al-Fajr Media wishes to receive assurances about us and if you are in communication with them, then inform them that we would like to meet with them. We ask them to come here and distribute a bulletin outlining the action plan for the al-Ansar network—and we are willing to blow ourselves up near the infidels at any moment, and if they have enough resources to provide us with the necessary financing, then a terrorist is ready.⁹

Indeed, rather than turn to al-Qa`ida for essential guidance and support, the Ansar al-Mujahideen administrators relied on the pooled volunteer efforts of their membership and each other. During another private chat accidentally revealed to the world during fumbling

attempts at website maintenance, an English-speaking deputy administrator nicknamed “Insurgent” explained to up-and-coming forum contributor “Terrorist 001” that

we need a lot of brothers who are ready to do something for Allah, and of course you can look out for more brothers who can cut videos and audio too. We need to develop our skills and this cannot be achieved when every one of us working alone, no discussions, no ideas...We need to adopt the way of thinking of our enemies and we need each other to strengthen each other...our mission is very long and dangerous...It's not just about copying and pasting...we need to develop our media skills, produce more videos and audio releases in arabic and also in english, and other languages if it possible. Doing this is gonna improve the quality and the professionalism [sic] of the brothers and sisters and you know very well how important media is.¹⁰

His statement reflects the decentralization of online jihadist propaganda. It is also evidence of the continued attraction of al-Qa`ida's narrative, and the efforts of propagandists to influence Muslims living in Western countries.

Providing Propaganda in Multiple Languages

The Ansar al-Mujahideen forum administrators have recognized the utility of providing jihadist propaganda in multiple languages. In his own messages to other users, the administrator known as “Insurgent” repeatedly emphasized the importance of making hardcore al-Qa`ida content available to English-speaking Muslims:

i think a very important problem our english readers today have is, lack of english subtitled videos and if we make subtitles to important videos, that will be a great help to the mujahideen, by spreading their words to the West. mujahideen releases more deserved to be watched by the West than arabs... it will help the muslims [sic]

youths in West to awake and take the path of glory-jihad. Our forum should do the maximum it can, to achieve this...i hope by the grace of Allah we can bring the english forum to a better position and thus providing a great service to the mujahideen in spreading their words, and making the audience aware of what is happening [sic] in the ongoing global jihad.¹¹

These sentiments square neatly with the ever increasing demand by al-Qa`ida and its global affiliates for Westernized operatives who defy traditional stereotypes and are capable of evading heightened security measures.

To put their plan into action, Ansar al-Mujahideen administrators such as “Insurgent” and Abu Omar al-Maqdisi began to systematically identify and recruit individuals within their immediate social network to help contribute in spreading the word of jihad in alternative languages. Abu Omar sent a private message over the forum to one such user, inviting him to support the mission:

Dear brother, i guess i know you from several jihadi forums and i realized your activity to support our brothers on jihad fronts and therefore I am inviting you to join me on the chat program...to discuss with you the responsibility of the english german section on our forum, if you are ready to make more differences in this important historical time which we are living in. I am waiting for you now if you are ready. We speak arabic, english, spanish, german.¹²

The “work” that Abu Omar al-Maqdisi spoke of extended far beyond merely translating Arabic-language propaganda. When Abu Omar expressed his desire to identify potential volunteers willing to create advertising banners and promotional material for the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum, his aide-de-camp “Insurgent” suggested, “i know a sister in another forum who is capable in graphic designing. but i have to contact

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=121.

¹¹ This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=62.

¹² This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=15.

her through the administration of that forum.”¹³ As promised, “Insurgent” sent a message to the “sister” asking her for help, effusing, “im really very happy that you came forward to help us. May allah reward you greatly for that...Good luck in your studies.”¹⁴

Offering Assistance and Facilitating Jihad

Abu Omar al-Maqdisi has also identified emerging opportunities to work with nascent mujahidin organizations in the field that lack established ties to major pre-existing online jihadist logistics groups (such as the al-Fajr Media Center or the Global Islamic Media Front). In this sense, Abu Omar envisions Ansar al-Mujahideen not merely as a fixed online discussion forum, but as a multi-tiered rival to al-Fajr and the GIMF in the competitive jihadist media market. He contacted a representative of a fringe Palestinian militant faction in Gaza known as “Jaish al-Ummah” and reported back that “they are in need of support to produce their productions, and they ask us for this.”¹⁵ Abu Omar forwarded an excerpt from their formal request to other forum administrators: “Brothers, we ask you to prepare an introductory segment for our films, and a conclusion...while leaving suitable space in the introduction to write on it the name of each new operation we undertake.”¹⁶

The various endeavors undertaken by Abu Omar and other Ansar al-Mujahideen administrators appear to be bearing fruit and gaining momentum. An official communiqué distributed by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (the Afghan Taliban) on October 7, 2009 identified the Ansar al-Mujahideen website as one of only three online discussion forums recommended as suitable venues to obtain the latest statements and video from the Afghan mujahidin.¹⁷ It may not have been an official endorsement, but it was a clear recognition of how high the star of Ansar al-Mujahideen has risen, despite its rather humble origins.

Beyond the formal activities being organized by administrators, the murky sanctuaries afforded by the private chat rooms on the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum have also been used by seemingly ordinary users to craft their own elaborate plans and plots. Two such users—a Moroccan and a resident of Saudi Arabia—became enmeshed in a deep discussion of how best to travel to nearby Somalia and join the emerging al-Shabab movement. “Nasruddin at-Tamimi” wrote to “Abu Aeisha,” “My dear brother, I used to think you were from Somalia, and I ask you to contact the brothers and make sure about the journey.”¹⁸ Abu Aeisha replied:

I can arrange with one of the brothers, but I don't know this brother well, and I don't want to throw away what I have here without some assurances and reliability, and I am in nature very careful dealing with the security aspect, and I don't speak about these issues until I am certain. But with you, despite the fact that I haven't known you for more than a month or so, my heart feels warmth towards you, and I ask Allah to group me with you in the highest ranks of paradise. Brother, just as a reminder, I know one of the Somali brothers who I met in another country, and this brother resides in the city of Medina—can he transport the brothers to Somalia! And since you are a resident in Medina, I'll send you the brother's name and his description so you can ask him for his phone number, and so I can call him, and Inshallah he will assist us.¹⁹

Abu Aeisha added,

I give you another piece of information, that I am from Morocco, meaning from Africa, and the distance between me and Somalia isn't easy. I had prepared for this once before with another brother, but Allah eased our fate. Yes, we have adopted the methods of high technology, and I ask of you brother for your address on [Instant] Messenger so we can

speak about this issue, and Allah knows that I am being honest.²⁰

Implications

The covert activities taking place behind the scenes on the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum reveal important lessons about how terrorists are actually using the internet, and how the growing phenomenon of decentralized, self-selecting “homegrown” terrorism has found such a resilient base for itself on the web. Even now, some analysts continue to treat the denizens of Ansar al-Mujahideen and other similar online “troll factories” as nothing more than useless “armchair jihadists.”

It is dangerous, however, to write off the threat posed by members of the Ansar al-Mujahideen forum. While their language and approach may seem immature, and even juvenile at times, the often unsung accomplishments of the administrators and users are beginning to have a measurable impact in terms of promoting terrorism and terrorist organizations—and these young men and women have repeatedly declared their intention to carry their mission into the real world. Their postings echo precisely the same language of Jordanian doctor Humam al-Balawi (also known as Abu Dujana al-Khurasani), who was once a prominent online “jihobbyist”²¹ and was likewise written off as an eccentric until he blew himself up at a Central Intelligence Agency base in southeastern Afghanistan at the behest of the Pakistani Taliban.

Certainly, the fringe threats flourishing on jihadist web forums may seem a bit overly ambitious and theatrical, but in the wake of recent troubling incidents, such as the suicide attack by Humam al-Balawi and the Ft. Hood massacre, they cannot be taken lightly.

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13 This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=74.

14 Ibid.

15 This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=166.

16 Ibid.

17 This was posted on www.alfalajaweb.info/vb/showthread.php?t=87055 on October 7, 2009.

18 This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=391.

19 Ibid.

20 This quote was available at www.as-ansar.com/vb/private.php?do=showpm&pmid=411.

21 “Jihobbyist” is a term coined by counterterrorism analyst Jarret Brachman.

Al-Qa`ida and Hamas: The Limits of Salafi-Jihadi Pragmatism

By Mary Habeck

IN 2006, THE SALAFI-JIHADI world was rocked by a surprising controversy: al-Qa`ida's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, issued a rebuke to Hamas for participating in the secular government in Palestine. By the end of 2007, after 12 separate statements criticizing Hamas, Usama bin Ladin announced that Hamas had "lost its religion," a declaration that was mirrored in combat between Salafi-jihadi militants aligned with al-Qa`ida and Hamas fighters on the streets of Gaza.¹ During the next two years, both the war of words and physical clashes expanded until the conflict culminated in a gun battle over a Gaza mosque in July 2009. Although Hamas defeated their al-Qa`ida-affiliated, Salafi-jihadi rivals, some observers believe that this was only the first round in an ongoing war.

There are multiple explanations for the friction between Hamas and al-Qa`ida. The fact that al-Qa`ida and its Salafi-jihadi followers are independent from Hamas' control and have attempted to subsume the Palestinian question might be enough to explain the conflict.² It is also possible that the conflict is between al-Qa`ida's vision of a global jihad versus Hamas' local jihad.³ This seems a possible explanation for Hamas' actions, but too weak to explain why the conflict was started by al-Qa`ida-inspired groups.⁴ It may be that

al-Qa`ida does not want to cooperate with "moderate" Muslims who are willing to use the electoral process to create a state—a statement that seems reasonable, given the timing of the split. A further explanation for the tensions between al-Qa`ida and Hamas, however, is necessary.⁵

Understanding the reason for the conflict from al-Qa`ida's perspective has implications for determining possible future actions by its followers. The leaders of al-Qa`ida rejected an obvious ally for their jihad in Hamas, showing the limits of cooperation between al-Qa`ida and other ideologically similar groups. Al-Qa`ida also criticized the pathway to power taken by Hamas—participation in an electoral process. Al-Qa`ida reaffirmed its commitment

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to fighting and stated through its actions that it is not amenable to a more peaceful and stealthier method for seizing control of a region or country. The incident shows, in fact, that al-Qa`ida and other Salafi-jihadi groups hold a few core principles upon which they will not compromise even if a more pragmatic course promises to lead to success.

A study of the fundamentals of al-Qa`ida's faith might help policymakers better understand when the group is likely to take a stand upon principle rather than take the realist route that outsiders might predict. The clash with Hamas has been so intense because it is based on al-Qa`ida's commitment to not one, but four key elements: *tawhid*, jihad, *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (loyalty and

disavowal), and Islamic land. In al-Qa`ida's view, the leadership of Hamas violated these unchanging constants, took itself outside the religion of Islam, and therefore could no longer expect help from other Salafi-jihadis.

Tawhid

After Hamas won a decisive victory in the January 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council, al-Qa`ida abruptly changed its earlier supportive messages for the group.⁶ In early March, al-Zawahiri issued a stern warning to the Hamas leadership, cautioning them that taking power was only valid when it was used to establish God's rule on earth through implementing Shari'a (Islamic law). Any other form of government would be a different religion.⁷ Bin Ladin reiterated the warning a month later, supporting the objectives of Hamas while stating that it was impermissible to participate in "polytheistic councils."⁸ In December, al-Zawahiri's tone was more combative, bluntly asserting that Hamas should never have participated in the elections at all as long as there was a secular, rather than Islamic, constitution in Palestine.⁹ In March 2007, al-Zawahiri declared that the Hamas leadership, in signing the Mecca agreement, was now lost; "doctrinal deviation," he said, "has facilitated behavioral deviation."¹⁰

The abrupt change in al-Qa`ida's view of Hamas is striking and tied explicitly to the participation of the Palestinian group in the elections. Yet what was it about the elections that caused so much consternation on the part of al-Qa`ida's leaders? Al-Zawahiri was quite clear in his first statement that the failure of Hamas to apply Shari'a, one of the

1 Usama bin Ladin, "The Way to Contain the Conspiracies," al-Sahab, December 2007.

2 Yet the Hamas leadership did not initially confront the global Salafi-jihadis active in Gaza and in fact allowed the group to grow for some time—perhaps as long as three years—before taking decisive action. See "Abbas Says al-Qaeda in Gaza," *Washington Times*, March 2, 2006; Ali Waked, "Al-Qaeda Affiliate Burns Coffee Shop in Gaza Strip," *Israel News*, October 8, 2006.

3 Kim Cragin, "Al Qaeda Confronts Hamas: Divisions in the Sunni Jihadist Movement and its Implications for U.S. Policy," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32:7 (2009): pp. 576-590, has a sophisticated discussion of the conflict. Cragin concludes that al-Qa`ida's ideological commitments to global jihad and against democracy explain the conflict, although she does not delve into from where these two commitments spring.

4 For this claim of a relationship with Mullah Omar, Bin

Ladin, and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, see www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nafaabuabdullah0609.pdf.

5 Jake Lipton, "The War of Words between Hamas and al-Qaeda," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, June 28, 2007.

6 See, for example, Khalid al-Hamadi, "Interview with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri (Abu-Jandal): Part Eight," *al-Quds al-Arabi*, March 26, 2005; "Statement From Al Qaida On The Martyrdom Of Shaykh Yasin," www.jihadunspun.com, March 24, 2004; "Full Text: 'Bin Laden Tape,'" BBC, April 15, 2004.

7 "Al-Zawahiri Urges Hamas to Ignore Deals With Israel," al-Jazeera, March 4, 2006.

8 Usama bin Ladin, "Oh People of Islam," al-Sahab, April 2006.

9 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief," al-Sahab, December 2006.

10 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Palestine is Our Business and the Business of Every Muslim," audio statement, March 11, 2007. See also "Interview with Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri," al-Sahab, May 5, 2007.

pillars of *tawhid* according to the *`aqida* (tenets of belief) of Salafi-jihadis, meant that they were no longer following the religion of Islam. Within the context of al-Qa`ida's particular interpretation of the religion, known as Salafi-jihadism, it is entirely consistent.

Tawhid, the belief that there is only one God and He alone should be worshipped, is the core of Islam.¹¹ Salafi-jihadis believe a correct adherence to the principle of *tawhid* includes a literal obedience to all laws ordered upon man in the Qur'an and sunna. To rule by anything other than what Allah has revealed, they so frequently argue, is an act of apostasy. Only God is sovereign and only He can legislate or make laws. Following this line of reasoning, democracy is a foreign religion and a form of polytheism. Any Muslim who supports or engages in democracy, including elections under a democratic system, has therefore left true *tawhid* and become an apostate.¹²

It is only through the lens of this ideological commitment that the controversy in 2007 can be understood. In June of that year, al-Zawahiri argued that there were ideological constants in the current struggle and that the Hamas leadership had crossed clear "red lines" when it decided to abandon Shari'a and accept the rule of the majority (democracy).¹³ Al-Qa`ida operative Abu Yahya al-Libi's condemnation of Hamas contrasted the infidel religion of democracy with the true religion of God, which was based on all sovereignty belonging to Him.¹⁴ More pointedly, by participating in democratic processes, al-Qa`ida operative Mustafa Abu'l-Yazid stated that the Hamas leadership had nullified their Islam and become infidels.¹⁵

11 This is why the term is generally translated as "monotheism," although this is a rather misleading rendition of the word. A better translation would be "absolute oneness" [of God].

12 For the best explication of this view of *tawhid*, see Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, "Democracy – a Religion!" available at www.scribd.com/doc/18993155/Democracy-a-Religion-Abu-Muhammad-alMaqdisi.

13 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Forty Years Since the Fall of Jerusalem," al-Sahab, June 25, 2007.

14 Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Palestine, Warning Call and Cautioning Cry," al-Sahab, April 30, 2007.

15 "Interview with Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, General Official of al-Qa`ida in Khurasan," al-Sahab, May 26, 2007.

Jihad

Al-Qa`ida's conclusion that Hamas had abandoned *tawhid* was but one of the charges leveled against the group. From the time of the election, al-Zawahiri and other al-Qa`ida leaders also warned Hamas not to succumb to U.S. pressure to stop violent resistance against Israel. There were two reasons provided for continuing the armed struggle. First, al-Zawahiri warned that "every way other than jihad will only lead us to loss and failure," since attempting to free any place occupied by the infidels through elections would never liberate even "one grain of sand," but would simply smother the jihad and keep out the mujahidin.¹⁶ Far more importantly, he quoted `Abdullah `Azzam to show that jihad had been commanded by God and was an individual duty on every Muslim in places such as Palestine that were occupied by the unbelievers.¹⁷

Al-Zawahiri's use of the term "individual duty" is exceptionally important, since Salafi-jihadis believe that there are two forms of jihad: the "individual duty" (*fard `ayn*) and the "collective duty" (*fard kifayya*). An individual duty is a command from God, like the daily prayer, fasting, or giving charity, which each Muslim must carry out to avoid sinning. Collective duties, on the other hand, can be carried out by a small part of the community (such as a regular army) and the masses are therefore excused from participation. According to Salafi-jihadis, whenever the Islamic community is under attack or its land occupied, it becomes an individual duty, *fard `ayn*, for every Muslim—men, women and children—to take up arms and fight jihad until its land is liberated. To refuse to do so is at least a sin and might mean that one is not even a Muslim at all.¹⁸

Al-Qa`ida's rejection of a peaceful solution for the Palestine-Israel conflict is thus absolute, based on both practical and ideological reasons, as is their rejection of a limitation of the jihad to that region alone. A constant theme in

16 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief," al-Sahab, December 2006.

17 Al-Zawahiri, "Palestine is Our Business and the Business of Every Muslim."

18 See, for example, `Abdullah `Azzam, *Defence of Muslim Lands. The First Obligation After Iman*, especially Chapter 3: *Fard `Ayn* and *Fard Kifayya*. This book is available at www.kalamullah.com/Books/defence.pdf.

al-Qa`ida's messages to Hamas is that the fight in Palestine is the business of the entire Islamic community, not the prerogative of one group, and that Hamas needs to carry out the jihad with all honest fighters (including al-Qa`ida fighters).¹⁹ Hamas should not, as al-Zawahiri said, isolate the mujahidin inside from the mujahidin outside.²⁰ There should be one battle, with all the mujahidin fighting as one community, under one religion, and against one enemy.²¹ More practically, jihad in Afghanistan, Iraq and other theaters was jihad for Palestine, and if Hamas limited the war to its small region, the enemy would surround and cut them off.²²

Al-wala' wa'l-bara'

The vision of a global jihad was related to the third principle that the Hamas leadership had abandoned: an allegiance to other Palestinians above the overall Muslim community. Al-Qa`ida leaders and allied clergy have written extensively against nationalism, emphasizing that Muslims share a bond that is far more important than ethnic or national identity.²³ This belief is founded on a concept called *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* (loyalty and disavowal), a term used by Salafi-jihadis to describe the love that a Muslim has for other Muslims and, conversely, the hatred and aversion for infidels that Muslims should display.²⁴ In practical terms, this principle means that Muslims should only ally and work with other Muslims, regardless of

19 Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, "Message: The Religion Is Advice," audio statement, February 21, 2008.

20 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief," al-Sahab, December 2006.

21 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Malicious Britain and its Indian Slaves," al-Sahab, July 2007.

22 "The West and the Dark Tunnel," Part 2, al-Fajr Media Center and al-Sahab, September 22, 2009.

23 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Video: The Correct Equation," al-Sahab, December 2006/January 2007; Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Tremendous Lessons and Events In the Year 1427 AH," al-Sahab, February 2007; Shari'a Council of The Al-Qa`ida Network in the Land of the Two Rivers, "Islam is Our Citizenship!" at-Tibyan Publications, undated; The Sharia Committee of Jaish Abu Bakr al-Siddiq al-Salafi, "Nationalism and Jihad," December 21, 2008, available at www.theunjustmedia.com.

24 Perhaps the first use of the term, and still one of the best explications of it, was by Muhammad Saeed al-Qahtani in his master's thesis *Al-Wala' wa'l-Bara'* (London: al-Firdous Ltd, 1992). One of his advisers for the thesis was Muhammad Qutb, the brother of Sayyid Qutb.

their national origin, while refusing to work with, ally with, or befriend non-Muslims, even if they are part of one's family.

In the context of the conflict with Hamas, al-Qa`ida argued that the group should not put Palestinian interests above Islam or work with nationalist groups such as Fatah, and it should not forget that Hamas' true friends and allies are their fellow Muslims around the world.²⁵ Abu Yahya al-Libi charged that nationalism and Palestinian unity had become the foundation of Hamas' relations and ties, to the point that it was impossible to differentiate between Hamas and secular movements.²⁶ In a lengthier condemnation of Hamas, he called *al-wala' wa'l-bara'* "in doctrine, concept, behavior, and action" the "strongest knot of faith," and one of the most important principles on which the jihadist methodology was founded. Loyalty meant that the Muslims were one nation, and that nothing connected with the Muslims was an internal issue. Disavowal implied unending hostility and fighting polytheists (as Hamas was becoming) until all on earth submitted to God's laws.²⁷

Islamic Land

Finally, in response to Hamas' decision to sign international agreements such as the Mecca accords, al-Qa`ida charged the group with trading land for peace, betraying the cause of the Palestinian jihad. In return, it received nothing from the United States and the international community: the embargo still continued, Fatah received all the aid, and the Israelis were continuing their "crimes" against Muslims.²⁸ Al-Zawahiri first mentioned this issue in March 2006, but made it a central part of his rejection of Hamas in 2007 when the leadership signed the Mecca agreement, and it was decried by each of Hamas' al-Qa`ida critics throughout 2007. By mid-2007, al-Zawahiri would state that Hamas had given four-fifths of Palestine

to the "Jews," and taken away Palestine from the Islamic community.²⁹

The fundamental tenet that Hamas had violated, al-Qa`ida argued, was that no piece of land ever held by the Muslim community—not even a grain of sand—could be given to the infidels.³⁰ One might be tempted to equate this belief with a view of Palestine accepted by Hamas—that Palestine is *waqf* (an inalienable religious endowment), and its land therefore cannot be sold or given away.³¹ Al-Qa`ida's views, however, go beyond this interpretation and declare every bit of territory ever held by "Islam" as inalienable. As al-Zawahiri noted,

"Al-Qa`ida leaders and allied clergy have written extensively against nationalism, emphasizing that Muslims share a bond that is far more important than ethnic or national identity."

"the recovery of every land which was once a land of Islam is the individual duty of every Muslim. Therefore, as Muslims, we cannot possibly concede to Israel so much as a hand-span of Palestine."³² By every bit of land, al-Zawahiri meant even lost Andalusia—which he and other al-Qa`ida leaders have consistently described as invaded and occupied Muslim territory—let alone more recently "lost" lands such as Palestine.³³ If Hamas would not change its mind about giving away Palestine, then the group needed to be opposed in order to follow God's orders and liberate the land from the infidels.

The Solution

The decision to confront Hamas was thus a natural conclusion given the group's rejection of these fundamental principles. Throughout 2006 and 2007, al-Qa`ida had a consistent message for Hamas' leadership: the only way to end the conflict was to return to true *tawhid*, foreswear international agreements that gave away Islamic land, take up jihad once again, and work with al-Qa`ida. At the same time, al-Zawahiri, Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu'l-Yazid and others reached out to the ordinary members of Hamas, making a clear distinction between the "honest" mujahidin—at times equated with the Qassam Brigades³⁴—and the corrupt leadership.³⁵

After July 2007, as Hamas began cracking down on affiliates ideologically allied with al-Qa`ida in Gaza and elsewhere, the tone changed. Now the invective from al-Qa`ida directed toward Hamas matched that pointed at other ideological enemies; guns were turned against fellow Muslims, and there were calls for insurrection by the "honest" mujahidin against the Hamas leadership.³⁶ In al-Qa`ida's version of events, doctrinal deviation had led to methodological deviation. It was Hamas that had sinned and rejected God: now they would pay with open war.³⁷

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25 Abu Yahya al-Libi, "Palestine, Warning Call and Cautioning Cry," al-Sahab, April 30, 2007; "Interview of Abu Yahya al-Libi by al-Sahab Media," al-Fajr Media Center, September 10, 2007.

26 Al-Libi, "Palestine, Warning Call and Cautioning Cry."

27 "Interview of Abu Yahya al-Libi by al-Sahab Media."

28 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "The Advice of One Concerned," al-Sahab, July 2007.

29 Ibid.

30 "Al-Zawahiri Urges Hamas to Ignore Deals With Israel," al-Jazeera, March 4, 2006.

31 See, for example, Shaykh Atiyatallah, "Shaykh Ayman: We Hold Him To Be a Preacher of Right-Guidance and Pure Tawhid," March 14, 2007.

32 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief," al-Sahab, December 2006.

33 Al-Zawahiri, "Palestine is Our Business and the Business of Every Muslim."

34 The Qassam Brigades is the military wing of Hamas.

35 This is a consistent theme in statements by al-Qa`ida's leadership on the Hamas conflict between 2006-2007.

36 "Ultimatum to HAMAS, Al-Qassam Brigades," al-Sawarim Media Institute, July 2, 2007; Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, "They Plotted and Planned, and Allah Too Planned," al-Furqan Media Productions, September 15, 2007; Al-Baghdadi, "Message: The Religion Is Advice."

37 Abdullah Haidar Shai, "Hamas-Shattering of the Image," Global Islamic Media Front and Dar al-Murabiteen Publications, December 22, 2009.

Lebanon at Risk from Salafi-Jihadi Terrorist Cells

By Bilal Y. Saab

LEBANON FACES NO real danger in the foreseeable future of al-Qa`ida establishing an organized insurgent presence in the country.¹ The basic, societal conditions for such an ambitious and demanding enterprise are non-existent. In Lebanon, what al-Qa`ida represents—a *takfiri* ideology, a militant agenda, and a radical political vision—has yet to capture the interest of the Lebanese Sunni Islamic community, with its many different factions. While al-Qa`ida may have recently made headways in Yemen, Somalia, and in other weak states around the world, these gains are extremely difficult if not impossible to replicate in a country such as Lebanon. Acknowledging the difficulty of creating a Lebanese franchise, it is likely that al-Qa`ida has switched its strategy and gone underground.²

Clandestine terrorist cells—some of which are homegrown and remnants of Fatah al-Islam,³ while others continue

to arrive from regional battlefields⁴—constitute the new threat in Lebanon. It is assumed that these cells, aided by al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) and al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), are now pursuing al-Qa`ida's goals in Lebanon: attack the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL),⁵ destabilize and sow terror in the domestic political scene, and try to ignite another war between Hizb Allah and Israel by launching rockets from southern Lebanon into northern Israel. This article assesses the nature of the threat posed by these terrorist cells to the stability of Lebanon and the security of UNIFIL.

Nahr al-Bared: The Day After

The 105-day battle between the Salafi-jihadi group Fatah al-Islam and the Lebanese army in the summer of 2007 ended with a resounding defeat of the group and the destruction of the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Bared.⁶ With Fatah al-Islam crushed, the group's plot to create a Salafi-jihadi insurgency in northern Lebanon and establish a radical Islamic state with Tripoli as its capital was averted.⁷

4 Personal correspondence, senior Lebanese army general who is a close aide to Deputy Director of Army Intelligence Abbas Ibrahim, August 2009. The army general specifically mentioned the battlefields of Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. He also suspected that some funding was coming from private sources in the Gulf, not from official government bodies.

5 Originally, UNIFIL was created by the Security Council in March 1978 to confirm Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese government in restoring its effective authority in the area. The mandate had to be adjusted twice, due to developments in 1982 and 2000. Following the summer 2006 war between Hizb Allah and Israel, the Council enhanced the force and decided that in addition to the original mandate, it would, among other tasks, monitor the cessation of hostilities, accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon, and extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons. As of October 31, 2009, UNIFIL's force consists of 30 troop contributing countries with a total of 12,410 peacekeepers stationed in southern Lebanon. For details, visit the official website of UNIFIL at www.unifil.unmissions.org.

6 The reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared is presently underway.

7 For more on Fatah al-Islam's strategy, please see Saab and Ranstorp, "Fatah al-Islam: How an Ambitious Jihadist Project Went Awry."

Although the operation was a success, the enemy did not suffer a total defeat, as evidenced by the fact that on the last day of the battle a few dozen militants managed to escape. Several were caught in the hills to the east, but their leader

“UNIFIL continues to be at risk of another terrorist attack, the lethality of which this time could be greater than in the past.”

Shakir al-Abssi and a few of his close aides, including the Saudi national Obeid Mubarak Abd al-Kafeel,⁸ were able to evade the dragnet.

With its leader in hiding at the time, Fatah al-Islam eventually transformed from a centralized insurgent group into a loose network of terrorist cells.⁹ “The battle is over and we won,” one Lebanese army general stated, “but the war has just started.”¹⁰ Today, a nonstop, largely behind-the-scenes intelligence war is raging between the Lebanese counterterrorism services and the terrorist cells. The outcome of this war will have important repercussions on the present and future stability of Lebanon and perhaps that of its neighbors.

8 Obeid Mubarak Abd al-Kafeel is a Saudi national and a senior member of Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon. He participated in the battle of Nahr al-Bared and lost his left eye due to a severe injury. With Shakir al-Abssi, he managed to escape on the last day of fighting to the nearby village of Markabta and then to the northern refugee camp of Baddawi, with the help of Lebanese Shaykh Hamza Kassem and Khaled Seif. Abd al-Kafeel stayed in Shaykh Kassem's house until his wounds healed. He later met Abu Hajer with whom he conducted the terrorist operations in Masaref district and al-Bahsas street. For more on Abd al-Kafeel, please see Ali Moussawi, “Sari: The Saudi al-Kafeel Executed the Damascus Bombing and Helped Jawhar in the Making of Bombs for al-Tall and al-Bahsas,” *al-Safir*, November 12, 2009.

9 For more analysis on Fatah al-Islam's transformation, please see Saab and Ranstorp, “Fatah al-Islam: How an Ambitious Jihadist Project Went Awry”; Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, “Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30:10 (2007): pp. 825-855.

10 Personal interview, senior Lebanese military intelligence officer who currently has a leading role in the counterterrorism campaign in the north, August 2009.

1 For more on the reasons why al-Qa`ida has failed to establish an insurgent base in Lebanon, please see Bilal Y. Saab, “Al-Qa`ida's Presence and Influence in Lebanon,” *CTC Sentinel* 1:12 (2008).

2 This is an assumption made by the author, supported by his reading of local events on the ground before and after the battle of Nahr al-Bared in summer 2007. Of course, no leader belonging to al-Qa`ida central or to any of its franchises in the Middle East has made a public statement detailing a switch in strategy in Lebanon. For more on the author's analysis of events in Lebanon before and after summer 2007, please see Saab, “Al-Qa`ida's Presence and Influence in Lebanon,” and Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, “Fatah al-Islam: How an Ambitious Jihadist Project Went Awry,” The Brookings Institution and the Swedish National Defence College, November 28, 2007.

3 Fatah al-Islam is a Salafi-jihadi group that is inspired by al-Qa`ida's ideology. Its links to al-Qa`ida in Iraq are verifiable and its members are mostly Arabs from various Middle Eastern countries. It emerged in the Nahr al-Bared Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon in November 2006. Its goals are unclear but include the establishment of an Islamic state in northern Lebanon, with Tripoli as its capital. In summer 2007, it fought the Lebanese army for more than three months in an effort to establish an insurgent presence in the north. The uprising failed and the Lebanese army eventually crushed the group.

A New Threat: Salafi-Jihadi Terrorist Cells

According to Lebanese press reports, soon after he fled the battlefield on September 2, 2007, Shakir al-Abssi handed over the leadership of Fatah al-Islam to Abdel Rahman Mohamad Awad (also known as Abu Mohamad Shahrour), Ousama Amine al-Shahabi (also known as Abu al-Zahra), and Ghazi Faysal Abdullah, three suspected Palestinian terrorists based in the refugee camp of Ain al-Hilwah.¹¹ The northern region, al-Abssi possibly calculated, was now under heavy surveillance by the Lebanese military intelligence services and was clearly not a favorable location for any terrorist re-mobilization campaign. Ain al-Hilwah was an ideal, although temporary spot where the terrorists could uninterruptedly plan ways to regroup.¹²

The instructions from al-Abssi, whose fate is unclear to this day,¹³ were clear and simple: to avenge the deaths of the Muslim fighters who died waging jihad against the “crusader” Lebanese army in Nahr al-Bared.¹⁴ The three men’s first job was to “test the pulse” of the Salafi-jihadi scene in the north and re-awaken the cells that were lying low in Tripoli.¹⁵ What they found, however, was not necessarily reassuring: many

of the cells lacked the human and technical resources necessary to wage any sustained terrorist campaign against the Lebanese authorities.¹⁶ Most importantly, the remaining terrorists’ drive and determination were low. One notable exception was Abdel Ghani Ali Jawhar (also known as Abu Hajer) who

“The assumption is that as long as Jund al-Sham exists, Fatah al-Islam’s cells in the north, led by terrorist-at-large Abu Hajer, will continue to receive supplies of men and materiel, making it more difficult for Lebanese counterterrorism services to combat the threat.”

would eventually become the leading coordinator of the terrorist cells in the north. Abu Hajer’s role is crucial to the mobilization and re-activation of the Salafi-jihadi movement in Lebanon following the battle of Nahr al-Bared.

Abu Hajer is a 32-year-old Lebanese Sunni Muslim from the small northern town of Bibnine.¹⁷ After earning a diploma in laboratory studies at the age of 21 from a technical school in Qobbeh, Tripoli, he taught Salafism in several religious institutes and private households based in the Wadi al-Jamous area.¹⁸ According to Shaykh Abdullah Mas’oud, who has lived in Bibnine for more than 64 years, very few students attended Abu Hajer’s class, often citing to their friends his uncompromising style of teaching and his extremist views on Shi’a Muslims in particular and non-

Muslims in general.¹⁹ Months later, Abu Hajer stopped teaching and decided to more deeply involve himself in the Salafi-jihadi movement in Lebanon. Unable to travel to Iraq due to security reasons, he went to Ain al-Hilwah to mingle with fellow Salafi-jihadis.²⁰

Once at the camp, Abu Hajer reportedly underwent intensive military training at the hands of Jund al-Sham,²¹ a militant Islamist group, learning how to engage in combat and plant explosives.²² Soon after his preparations, he was appointed by Fatah al-Islam’s three leaders in the camp as the group’s point man in the north.²³ During a period of two months, Abu Hajer would form his own 11-person cell by enlisting young, poor, and alienated recruits from his hometown of Bibnine, starting with his brother Mohamad Ali Jawhar and including Isaac al-Sayyed al-Sabsabi, Imama al-Sayyed al-Sabsabi, Omar al-Sabsabi, Abdel Karim Mustapha, Rashid Mustapha, Razan al-Khaled, Ayman al-Hindawi, Rabi’ al-‘Ouweyid and Marwan al-Khaled.²⁴ Abu Hajer indoctrinated his followers at the “Islah” mosque in Bibnine, explaining to them the need to fight the “infidels,” be they Lebanese Shi’a Muslims or the Lebanese army.²⁵

After receiving the news of Abu Hajer and what he was able to accomplish in his hometown, Fatah al-Islam’s leadership in Ain al-Hilwah decided to offer him extra help.²⁶ Mohamad Mahmoud Azzam, an explosives expert who participated in the war in Iraq and

11 Ali Moussawi, “Mezher Orders Capital Punishment for Members of Fatah al-Islam Including Awad, Shahabi, and Jawhar,” *al-Safir*, September 14, 2009.

12 The Ain al-Hilwah Palestinian refugee camp is reportedly a recruiting ground for Salafi-jihadi currents in Lebanon. Located in the southeastern part of Sidon’s port and reputed to be the most impoverished and radical Palestinian refugee camp in the Arab world, Ain al-Hilwah is home to about 75,000 refugees. The four entrances to Ain al-Hilwah are controlled by the Lebanese army. Internal security, however, is maintained by rival Palestinian groups, ranging from the extreme left to the extreme right. Since Ain al-Hilwah’s creation, it has been the policy of successive Lebanese governments to instruct the army to refrain from entering the area for fear of clashing with reportedly more than a dozen militant factions all competing for influence inside the camp.

13 Since the end of the battle of Nahr al-Bared, conflicting reports have circulated in the Arab and foreign media concerning the fate of al-Abssi. It is still unclear whether al-Abssi was captured or killed by Syrian forces while trying to cross the Lebanese-Syrian border. For more details, see “Fatah al-Islam Says Leader Ambushed in Syria,” *al-Arabiya*, December 10, 2008.

14 Moussawi, “Mezher Orders Capital Punishment for Members of Fatah al-Islam Including Awad, Shahabi, and Jawhar.”

15 Ibid.

16 This is the story recounted by captured terrorist Isaac al-Sabsabi, parts of which were covered in *al-Safir* newspaper on September 14, 2009. See Moussawi, “Mezher Orders Capital Punishment for Members of Fatah al-Islam Including Awad, Shahabi, and Jawhar.”

17 The author was offered a copy of the biography of Abu Hajer during a meeting in summer 2009 with several military intelligence officers in Yarzeh, the headquarters of the Lebanese Ministry of Defense. Subsequent references are marked “Biography of Abu Hajer.”

18 Ibid.

19 Personal interview, Shaykh Abdullah Mas’oud, Tripoli, Lebanon, July 2009.

20 “Biography of Abu Hajer.”

21 Jund al-Sham is a title claimed by several Sunni Islamic extremist entities, all or none of which may be connected. These entities mostly operate in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, and their goals include the establishment of an Islamic caliphate throughout the Levant. During the battle of Nahr al-Bared, Jund al-Sham fighters joined Fatah al-Islam in their fight against the Lebanese army.

22 “Biography of Abu Hajer.”

23 Ibid.

24 Moussawi, “Sari: The Saudi al-Kafeel Executed the Damascus Bombing and Helped Jawhar in the Making of Bombs for al-Tall and al-Bahsas.”

25 Ibid.

26 This information is based on a report released by the Lebanese military intelligence services, parts of which were covered in *al-Safir* newspaper on December 2, 2009.

who allegedly was a confidant of the late AQI *amir* Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi,²⁷ was sent from the camp to Bibnine to meet with Abu Hajer, hand him a modest amount of money and teach him how to plant sophisticated plastic explosives and roadside bombs for the purpose of attacking UNIFIL and Lebanese army bases.²⁸ On May 31, 2008, Abu Hajer managed to place six plastic explosives in the Lebanese military intelligence base of Abdeh at 3:50 AM, only one of which exploded effectively, killing one soldier and injuring two during their sleep.²⁹ Approximately a month later, Abu Hajer asked two of his aides to plant another bomb on the road leading to the Qolei`at Lebanese air force base where many army vehicles pass by on a daily basis.³⁰ Fortunately, the bomb did not explode and was eventually detected and deactivated.

On August 13, 2008, two cells linked to Abu Hajer led by Saudi national Abd al-Kafeel (who later conducted a suicide attack in Syria) assaulted Lebanese army bases in the Masaref district and Bahsas neighborhood in Tripoli.³¹ On January 15, 2009, Abu Hajer, according to local media, personally shot and killed George Atieh, a Lebanese Christian drugstore owner, for selling alcoholic beverages.³² Following interrogations with Azzam and Isaac al-Sabsabi, who Lebanese military intelligence services arrested in two sophisticated operations in May and September 2009, the two terrorists confessed that Abu Hajer also had detailed plans to assassinate Lebanese Internal Security Forces Director Ashraf Rifi and to conduct high-profile operations against UNIFIL with the help of his allies in Ain al-Hilwah.³³

27 Moussawi, "Sari: The Saudi al-Kafeel Executed the Damascus Bombing and Helped Jawhar in the Making of Bombs for al-Tall and al-Bahsas."

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 This is the story recounted by captured terrorist Mo-hamad Mahmoud Azzam, parts of which were covered in *al-Safir* newspaper on September 14, 2009.

33 Moussawi, "Sari: The Saudi al-Kafeel Executed the Damascus Bombing and Helped Jawhar in the Making of Bombs for al-Tall and al-Bahsas."

The Link to Ain al-Hilwah

While Abu Hajer was planning and conducting terrorist operations with his aides in the north, the cells in Ain al-Hilwah were also actively involved in the campaign against the Lebanese authorities. In August 2009, the Lebanese military intelligence services arrested Hamza al-Kasem, an aide to Abdel Rahman Mohamad Awad, one of the three men now in charge of Fatah al-Islam's cells in Ain al-Hilwah.³⁴ Following interrogations with al-Kasem, he admitted that his boss was behind the December 12, 2007 assassination of Lebanese army general and director of operations Francois Hagg and the attacks against the Tanzanian, Spanish, and Colombian peacekeepers in June and July 2007.³⁵ Awad's cells are also suspected of killing Industry Minister Pierre Gemayel in November 2006, Member of Parliament Walid Eido in June 2007, and Lebanese Internal Security Forces Captain Wissam Eid in January 2008; no hard evidence, however, has so far surfaced linking Awad or Abu Hajer to these three assassinations.³⁶

Soon after the battle of Nahr al-Bared ended, Lebanese Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence Abbas Ibrahim entered Ain al-Hilwah with two of his aides to meet with leaders of Asbat al-Ansar.³⁷ The meeting was anything but cordial, but its purpose was to discuss a plan that would bring an

34 Khodr Taleb, "An Important Catch: The Army Arrests Fatah al-Islam Member Hamza al-Kasem," *al-Safir*, August 2, 2009.

35 On June 24, 2007, three Spanish and three Colombian UN soldiers were killed when a bomb destroyed their armored troop carrier. A month later, another bomb exploded near a UNIFIL position, causing no casualties. On January 8, 2008, two members of the Irish contingent were wounded when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb near Rmaileh village, 22 miles south of Beirut. See Hassan Oleik, "Naim Abbas Killed Francois Hagg," *al-Akhbar*, August 29, 2009.

36 Zeina Karam, "Fatah al-Islam Assassinated Lebanese Minister Gemayel," *Ya Libnan*, July 8, 2007.

37 Asbat al-Ansar is a Palestinian Salafi-jihadi group that was involved in a number of terrorist operations against Lebanese official targets in the past, including the killings of four judges in a courtroom in Sidon in June 1999. Recently, it reached a permanent truce with the Lebanese authorities in return for its intelligence cooperation on al-Qa`ida elements in the Ain al-Hilwah camp. These details are based on the author's personal interviews with mid-level sources inside Lebanon's military intelligence services in summer 2009.

end to the "problem of Jund al-Sham" in the camp. Jund al-Sham, a network of freelance Salafi-jihadi fighters that has a presence in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, was the only Islamist force to heed Fatah al-Islam's call for support during its battle in Nahr al-Bared. On several occasions, Asbat al-Ansar tried to contain Jund al-Sham by offering membership to its fighters, but with little success.³⁸ Jund al-Sham accused Asbat al-Ansar of compromising its own Islamist credentials by cooperating with the "apostate" Lebanese authorities for material political fortunes.

Today, Jund al-Sham's network and Fatah al-Islam's cells in Ain al-Hilwah are allied and uneasily co-existing with the other Palestinian factions in the camp including Fatah, Hamas, Asbat al-Ansar, and al-Haraka al-Islamiyya al-Moujahida led by Jamal Khattab. The assumption is that as long as Jund al-Sham exists, Fatah al-Islam's cells in the north, led by terrorist-at-large Abu Hajer, will continue to receive supplies of men and materiel, making it more difficult for Lebanese counterterrorism services to combat the threat.

Conclusion

Despite the substantial evidence that has recently been released by the Lebanese authorities following interrogations with captured terrorists, a number of influential Lebanese commentators and editorialists continue to treat the issue of al-Qa`ida-related terrorism in Lebanon with great suspicion. In their minds, al-Qa`ida's global network has no independent presence in the country. They view the threat as a fabrication by the Syrian intelligence services intended to destabilize Lebanon and restore Damascus' political control that was lost after it was forced to withdraw its troops from the country in May 2005. While this is possible given the negative role Syria's intelligence services have played in Lebanon, the theory remains unsupported by hard evidence. What is encouraging is the fact that the official establishment, including many formerly anti-Syrian politicians who were once skeptical of the al-Qa`ida threat, are now revisiting their views and appreciating the gravity of the problem, allowing

38 Fidaa Itani, "Jund al-Sham to the Forefront from the Gate of Terror and Terrorism," *al-Akhbar*, January 2, 2010.

the security apparatus to operate under fewer political constraints.

Underfunded and ill-equipped, the Lebanese military intelligence services, often in coordination with the internal security forces, have so far done a remarkable job in fighting the terrorism threat. Yet the threat is now arguably too big for a small country like Lebanon to handle on its own. The Lebanese government also has a legal responsibility to protect UNIFIL, but it cannot do this crucial job by itself. The newly-shaped Lebanese counterterrorism apparatus needs financial and technical help from its regional friends and from those countries that have a vested interest in preserving the fragile calm along the Lebanese-Israeli border. With a few terrorist leaders still at large and an unknown number of cells actively plotting attacks, UNIFIL continues to be at risk of another terrorist attack, the lethality of which this time could be greater than in the past.³⁹

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The Changing Scene in Londonistan

By Raffaello Pantucci

IN THE FIRST month of 2010, the world was reminded of the terrorism threat in the United Kingdom. Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab's partial radicalization in London, the decision to finally proscribe the extremist group al-Muhajiroun and the ratcheting up of the terrorism threat level ahead of the Summit on Afghanistan all highlighted once again how the United Kingdom remains the focus of the terrorism threat to the West.¹ The nature of this threat, however, has changed since the days before 9/11, when London was often called "Londonistan" due to the heavy presence of extremist groups in the city.² Today, radicalization and extremist activity in the United Kingdom no longer occurs at the level it once did. Nevertheless, the activity still taking place is harder to legislate against and more difficult to combat.

This article will explain how "Londonistan" has changed during the last decade. Overtly violent extremist preaching has become much more discrete, while the internet has become a major feature in radicalizing young people. The article will also show how old and new threats have melded together to create a threat matrix that presents a new set of legislative challenges for British authorities.

The Banning of Al-Muhajiroun

One of the most visible parts of Londonistan was laid to rest in January 2010 when the British government finally took the step of adding al-Muhajiroun to the list of banned organizations under the UK Terrorism Act of 2000. The decision was officially

made because al-Muhajiroun was "another name for both Al Ghurabaa and The Saved Sect,"³ two descendent groups of al-Muhajiroun that had been banned in July 2006. The reason for the apparently back-to-front nature of the proscription was that al-Muhajiroun had officially disbanded itself in October 2004, likely out of concerns of impending proscription at the time.⁴ It rapidly re-established itself in a series of different groups, most prominent of which were al-Ghurabaa (The Strangers), The Saved Sect, and Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (The Followers of the Sunna). The first two were banned soon after they were linked to protests at the Danish Embassy in London in February 2006, which resulted in some individuals being prosecuted for inciting racial hatred.⁵ The third name, Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah, remains theoretically active, but has not yet been banned.⁶ Al-Muhajiroun, on the other hand, simply went silent, although individuals in the group described al-Muhajiroun as the overarching umbrella under which the other groups operated. More recently, the group marshaled its forces under the banner "Islam4UK," which was among the groups banned under the latest proscription order.

The actual decision to ban al-Muhajiroun was surprisingly controversial. The group had announced its intention to march through Wootton Bassett, a village that has become synonymous with British war dead due to the regular processions of coffins along the high street, and the public perception is that the ban was a reaction to this announcement. The British government, however, claimed that the decision was the product of a review of al-Muhajiroun's status by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Center (JTAC).⁷

1 Sean O'Neill and Giles Whittell, "Al Qaeda 'Groomed' Abdulmutallab in London," *Times* [London], December 30, 2009; Dominic Casciani, "Analysis: Does Banning Terror Groups Work?" BBC, January 12, 2010; "UK Terrorist Threat Level Raised to 'Severe,'" BBC, January 23, 2010.

2 The term "Londonistan" was coined by the French security services who were angry at the volume of jihadist groups and individuals who found safe sanctuary in the United Kingdom and in its apparently lax legislation to counter radical groups not threatening British soil. Most were in London, hence the term Londonistan.

3 The official proscription order can be found at www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2010/uksi_20100034_en_1.

4 Omar Bakri Mohammed, "An Official Declaration Dissolving Al Muhajiroun," www.almuhajiroun.net, October 8, 2004.

5 "Four Men Jailed Over Cartoon Demo," BBC, July 18, 2007.

6 "Theoretically" because the al-Muhajiroun descendent groups tend to operate using many different fronts, making it hard to ascertain which one is behind any particular activity.

7 Casciani.

39 Bilal Y. Saab and Magnus Ranstorp, "Terror Alert: Let Us Protect UNIFIL and Fast," *Daily Star*, February 1, 2010.

Regardless of the true reasons, the impact was minimal. While extremists retired the al-Muhajiroun name and closed down its most widely known website, www.islam4uk.com, they quite openly said that the decision was not going to affect them. "Unless the government can prove that you are ostensibly exactly the same organization, doing the same things at the same time, it's very difficult to clamp down," explained al-Muhajiroun's co-founder.⁸ In fact, new websites are already operating that provide the same sort of services as www.islam4uk.com, including providing speeches, videos and books by radical preachers such as Abu Hamza, Omar Bakri Mohammed and Anwar al-Awlaqi, alongside the work of new younger preachers who claim to have trained at the feet of such men.⁹

This is the reality of the "new Londonistan," where a group of jihadists continue to espouse extremist rhetoric within the constraints of the British legal system, even if they are not as able to openly support terrorism as before. While to outsiders this might simply seem an extension of previous British policy of placating extremists so that they do not undertake violent actions in the United Kingdom, the truth is that British counterterrorism policy has moved far beyond this. The problem is that the threat has now evolved in a new direction.

The New Londonistan

Unlike the 1990s, today London is not a hub of openly jihadist international activity. The Finsbury Park Mosque is no longer a training ground and supply shop where terrorists can come and equip themselves with fake identification papers, currency and invitation letters to go to military training camps in Afghanistan.¹⁰ The wide Algerian network that used to operate with impunity from British shores has been for the most part chased

away, while the radical preachers who poisoned the minds of Britain's youth have been expelled from the country (such as Omar Bakri Mohammed) or are behind bars (such as Abu Hamza and Abu Qatada). The younger men who aspire to fill these individuals' shoes are also facing legal trouble and lack the experience on the battlefield or religious credibility that made the earlier generations so inspirational.

This has dulled one of the primary functions of Londonistan as a global threat: the United Kingdom is no longer an environment in which extremist ideologies can flourish and active recruiters can easily find individuals to rally to the cause. For example, Djamel Beghal, who allegedly operated out of the Finsbury Park Mosque and recruited Richard Reid, Zacarias Moussaoui and Nizar Trablesi,¹¹ and Abu Munthir, who allegedly played a critical role in the formation of the cell codenamed "Crevice,"¹² used the networks fostered by radical preachers to seek recruits. Some individuals who make up this shadow network continue to live in the United Kingdom and appear on the periphery of counterterrorism operations, and a few are under controversial "control orders."

Either way, the pools from which they might attempt to fish for recruits have been dried up to some extent. Previously, sessions organized by radical clerics would have provided fertile ground from which they might find excitable young men interested in graduating from vacuous preaching into physical violence. An openly radical fringe remains—as was mentioned earlier, al-Muhajiroun has merely morphed under new nomenclature—but the attention they attract from the security services and media makes it hard to imagine that serious terrorist elements would be drawn to their meetings.¹³

Instead, recruiting networks appear to operate on the periphery of the more anti-establishment groups that protest against the war on terrorism and ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Clearly, the overwhelming majority of protestors are peaceful and are merely expressing opinions. Yet this peaceful activism can provide cover for more extremist elements to seek recruits, and the defining line can be hard to distinguish. Key individuals in a variety of plots have appeared to be involved in organizations that ostensibly claim to offer support for Muslim prisoners or to be channeling aid to South Asia. Others have been involved in student politics, with four cases of student presidents of university Islamic organizations being charged with terrorist plotting. This would appear to be where Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was sped along the path that led to him attempting to blow up a commercial airliner on December 25, 2009. As an activist in London's student politics and Islamist scene, he was also in contact with extremists who may have provided him with connections in Yemen.

Londonistan Goes Viral

The biggest threat from Londonistan, however, was the incubation of extremist ideologies that it provided. According to al-Qa`ida theorist Abu Mus`ab al-Suri, in the 1990s "being in London would place you at the centre of the events."¹⁴ The concentration of extremists, according to al-Suri, meant that he "found that there was an opportunity to resume my contribution [to jihad], and my participation in writing, by staying in London."¹⁵ This function still exists in some form, with openly radical and influential individuals still operating within the United Kingdom, but much of the dangerous rhetoric and radicalization has migrated online.

It is in the online world that individuals such as Aabid Khan and Younis Tsouli operated; both young men were

8 Fiona Hamilton, "Islam4UK's Radical Spokesman Anjem Choudary Pledges to Keep Preaching," *Times*, January 16, 2010.

9 One of these websites, for example, can be found at www.salafimedia.com.

10 Sean O'Neill and Daniel McGrory, *The Suicide Factory* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006) provides a comprehensive account of Abu Hamza and his activities at the Finsbury Park Mosque.

11 Steve Bird, "Quiet Existence in Leicester Suburb Masked a Complex Terrorist Network," *Times*, April 2, 2003.

12 Emily Flynn Vencatt and Mark Hosenball, "Pyrrhic Victory?" *Newsweek*, May 1, 2007. For more on Abu Munthir's role, see *Regina v. Mohammed Momin Khwaja*, Ontario Superior Court, October 29, 2008.

13 This is not to discount them altogether, aside from the fact that the government believes they are involved in terrorism and has hence proscribed them. In late 2009, the *Sunday Times* ran an interview from Pakistan with a for-

mer head of al-Muhajiroun in Ireland, Khalid Kelly, who claimed to be training in Pakistan's Swat to kill foreign soldiers. See "Irishman Wants to Kill for Islam," *Sunday Times*, November 15, 2009. Furthermore, a number of members have been arrested for various breaches of the peace and for charges linked to terrorism legislation.

14 Quoted in Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad* (London: Hurst & Co., 2007), p. 121.

15 Ibid.

convicted of involvement in terrorism and were key instigators in a global terrorist network operating from the internet in the United Kingdom.¹⁶ Other individuals such as Nicky Reilly¹⁷ and Isa Ibrahim¹⁸ were instead apparently drawn in by material they found online and tried to build explosive devices on their own. Ibrahim was interdicted before he could execute his plot, but Reilly was only prevented by his own incompetence when his bomb failed to detonate properly in the middle of a restaurant in Exeter in May 2008.

It is also on the internet that security services are increasingly concentrating their efforts, attempting to identify threats through the internet or finding legal ways of charging people who step beyond the boundary with online extremism. These include individuals such as Krenar Lusha, who was identified through a network of online extremists and later convicted while in possession of an assortment of radical material as well as 71.8 liters of petrol and potassium nitrate,¹⁹ or Bilal Mohammed and Rizwan Ditta who both pled guilty to charges of distributing extremist material obtained online.²⁰ Other cases have proved more difficult, however, with a group of cases linked to the internet in Lancashire largely dropping off the radar for legal reasons.²¹ Moreover, part of the case against Mohammed Atif Siddique that stated he was involved in actual terrorist planning was overturned and he was released from prison, although other charges against him stood.²²

Finally, some cases, such as the one against the young Mohammed Gul who stands accused of disseminating extremist material by e-mail, remain on the docket.²³

Conclusion

Radicalization remains an issue in the United Kingdom, although the threat has evolved away from the old structures that used to make up the infamous Londonistan. Radicalization today is more difficult for policymakers to legislate against. Dangerous extremist activities online are hard to distinguish from the vast mass of meaningless extremism on the internet, while parts of the real-world portion have melded into the mainstream of British political discourse. This makes it difficult to craft legislation that targets groups specifically that does not also catch harmless and legitimate forms of political discourse.

Physical jihad continues to hold sway, with events in Afghanistan and East Africa drawing young men into their thrall,²⁴ but the networks and extremist rhetoric that were previously responsible for the stream of individuals going to training camps have been forced into a less prominent position. Unfortunately, however, a hardcore of jihadist thinking remains, making what happens in the United Kingdom still relevant for the global fight against terrorism.

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16 For more on this network, please see Evan Kohlmann, "Anatomy of a Modern Homegrown Terror Cell: Aabid Khan et al," NEFA Foundation, September 2008; Raffaello Pantucci, "Operation Praline: The Realization of Al-Suri's Nizam la Tanzim?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 2:12 (2008).

17 Adam Fresno, "Nicky Reilly, Muslim Convert, Jailed for 18 Years for Exeter Bomb Attack," *Times*, January 31, 2009.

18 Raffaello Pantucci, "Britain Jails 'Lone Wolf' Terrorist Isa Ibrahim," *Terrorism Monitor* 7:23 (2009).

19 "Man Sentenced to Seven Years for Terrorism Offences," *Derbyshire Constabulary*, December 15, 2009.

20 "Muslim Man Who Sold DVDs Glorifying the 9/11 Atrocities Jailed Under New Terror Laws," *Daily Mail*, March 20, 2008.

21 "PM Death Plot Suspects in Court," *Derby Evening Telegraph*, October 4, 2008; "Jury in Blackburn Terrorist Trial Discharged," *Lancashire Telegraph*, July 27, 2009.

22 The charges that held include spreading extremist

material online, as he was linked into the broader Khan/Tsouli network. See "Siddique Terrorism Charges in Detail," BBC, February 9, 2010.

23 "Man Charged With Sending Terrorist Material by Email," *Daily Mail*, February 24, 2009.

24 The case of Mohammed Abushamma is instructive in the case of Afghanistan. See "Student Jailed for Trying to Fight British in Afghanistan," *London Evening Standard*, June 18, 2009. The Somali case is increasingly a concern. See Richard Kerbaj, "UK Students Recruited for Somali Jihad," *Sunday Times*, January 24, 2010.

Political Islam in Central Asia: The Role of Hizb al-Tahrir

By Emmanuel Karagiannis

ONE OF THE fastest growing global, Sunni Islamic political organizations is Hizb al-Tahrir (the Islamic Liberation Party, HT).¹ HT often escapes in-depth analysis because the group itself does not use violence to seek political change. As a result, it is not on the U.S. government's list of terrorist organizations. Nevertheless, HT is pursuing an agenda at odds with the West, and eventually the group could pose an active threat to the United States and its allies.

Profiling HT is important as the group is one of the most popular pan-Islamic organizations, counting tens of thousands of members.² While it rejects violence at this time, it is open to waging jihad once a proper Islamic state is established with the purpose of creating a global Islamic caliphate. To establish this initial Islamic state, HT is pursuing an agenda to make society more "Islamist" so that such a state can be established peacefully. Nevertheless, the group ascribes to a little discussed strategy called *nusra*, which means it could support a coup d'état by an armed force if that force is pursuing an Islamist agenda.

This article will provide background on HT, including its strategy to establish an Islamic caliphate. It will then profile HT's role in Central Asia, the region in which it is most active.

Background on Hizb al-Tahrir

HT was founded in East Jerusalem in 1953 by Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, an Islamic scholar of Palestinian origin. In the decades since its establishment, HT

1 Hizb al-Tahrir is more commonly transliterated as Hizb ut-Tahrir.

2 HT's total numbers in Central Asia are not known because the group operates clandestinely. There are, however, some 6,000 HT members and sympathizers serving time in Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik prisons. The U.S. State Department claims, for example, that as many as 4,500 HT members are currently jailed in Uzbekistan alone. See the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Uzbekistan - International Religious Freedom Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 2007).

has become an international movement³ with tens of thousands of followers worldwide. Although the group is primarily active in Central Asia, it also has a large following in a number of Western countries, including in the United States. Today, HT is led by Ata Abu Rashta, a Palestinian civil engineer who studied in Cairo and previously served as the party's spokesman in Jordan.

HT does not view itself as a religious organization, but as a political party based on Islamic values. HT's political doctrine is founded on two principles. The first is the need for Islamic law, or Shari'a, to regulate all aspects of human life—politics, economics, science and ethics. The second principle is the need for an authentic Islamic state, which would pave the way for the re-establishment of the Islamic caliphate. According to HT, a "just" society can only be achieved within such a political entity.

HT's goal is to create an Islamic state that will first absorb all Muslim-populated territories into its borders to establish a caliphate, and then spread Islam worldwide through jihad. For instance, al-Nabhani wrote in Article 183 of his proposed constitution for the future Islamic state that "conveying the Islamic da'wah [to the world] is the axis around which the foreign policy revolves, and the basis upon which the relation between the [Islamic] state and other states is built."⁴ Moreover, "this policy is implemented by a defined method that never changes, which is jihad, regardless of who is in authority. Jihad is the call to Islam which involves fighting or the contribution of money, opinions, or literature towards the fighting."⁵ To achieve these goals, HT envisages a three-stage program of action, modeled after the three stages that the Prophet Muhammad experienced on his path to establishing the first Islamic state:

Stage One: Recruitment of members.
Stage Two: Islamization of society.
Stage Three: Takeover of the state and jihad against non-believers.⁶

³ The terms group, party, organization and movement are used interchangeably in this article.

⁴ Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani, *The Islamic State* (London: al-Khilafah Publications, 1998), p. 275.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 143-144.

⁶ Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain, *The Method to*

To achieve this strategy, HT does not want to seize control of the state by force and coerce society into accepting its political agenda. Rather, HT wants to persuade society to accept its ideas willingly, which would then inevitably lead to a regime change. Yet even in these circumstances, it is likely that HT would use some form of pressure to remove recalcitrant regimes; party ideologues have often implied that regimes could be overthrown by acts of civil disobedience, such as demonstrations and strikes. For example, the media representative of HT in Britain, Imran Waheed, once wrote:

a day will come when the Muslims will take revenge against all those who participated in their oppression [i.e. the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan]. Hizb ut-Tahrir does not use weapons or resort to violence, nor uses any physical means in its call...However, do not expect, that these rulers and their regimes will collapse all by themselves. On the contrary, patient believers are required to shake these regimes and uproot them.⁷

Moreover, HT has also developed the concept of seeking outside support (*nusra*) to remove a regime from power. HT compares this strategy to how the Prophet Muhammad received support from Arab tribes in his conquest of Medina after he fled Mecca for fear of persecution by the pagan leaders.⁸ HT has interpreted the conquest of Medina as a coup d'état orchestrated by the Prophet Muhammad and his allies that took their local opponents by surprise. According to the group's literature,

if the land was a land of Kufr and the rules of Islam were not put in implementation, then removing the ruler who governs over the Muslims would be through using the method of Nusrah, i.e. seeking [military]⁹

Re-establish the Khilafah and Resume the Islamic Way of Life (London: al-Khilafah Publications, 2000), p. 32.

⁷ Imrad Waheed, "Who Killed Farhad Usmanov?" *Caliphate*, July 2002.

⁸ Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change* (London: al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), p. 22.

⁹ HT refers to the "people of support" (ahl un-Nusra) who were physically powerful enough not only to help establish the first Islamic state, but also to defend it against enemies. They were the equivalent of an army. By definition, those who now can help in re-establishing the

help. This is the method that the Prophet Muhammad adopted to establish the State of Islam and to implement the Islamic rules.¹⁰

In practice, this means that HT could support a coup organized by a military that would have first embraced Islamism as its ideology. For example, HT encouraged elements within the Jordanian armed forces to overthrow the Jordanian government in 1968 and 1969. Moreover, there are indications that some members of HT were linked to a failed coup attempt in Egypt in 1974.¹¹ The objectives of seeking *nusra* for the re-establishment of the caliphate are twofold: first, to enable HT to continue its political struggle without risking a military confrontation with authorities; second, to propagate its ideology to the security forces so that they overthrow existing regimes and establish an Islamic state.

It is important to note, however, that HT never developed a paramilitary wing and its members did not provide military support for the coup attempts in Jordan and Egypt, although these coups were aimed at establishing an Islamic state. Moreover, HT has not been involved in any other violent or velvet coups in the Muslim world since the mid-1970s.

HT's Role in Central Asia

Although HT has influence globally—including in the United States and in the West—it is most active in Central Asia because it has faced little competition from other Islamist groups in this region. There are a number of factors that led to HT's rise in Central Asia, not least of which is the fact that Central Asia is predominately Muslim.¹² Poor economic conditions in post-Soviet Central Asia provided fertile soil for Islamist groups to achieve support in changing the

caliphate must be armed. On more than one occasion, HT has openly asked the armed forces of Muslim countries to intervene in certain states. Therefore, it must be emphasized that HT is interested in those who are militarily (not politically) capable.

¹⁰ *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p. 22.

¹¹ S. Taji-Farouk, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate* (London: Grey Seal, 1996), pp. 27, 168.

¹² According to the CIA World Factbook, the Muslim populations in the four Central Asian republics are: Tajikistan (90%), Uzbekistan (88%), Kazakhstan (47%), and Kyrgyzstan (75%).

current social order. Governments in Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan exclude Uzbek minorities, which has allowed HT to recruit among this class in these countries. Furthermore, many in the population are attracted to the prospect of an Islamic government, primarily due to the lack of legitimate channels for protest against the region's authoritarian governments.

Moreover, the collapse of communism produced an ideological vacuum in Central Asia, which HT has attempted to fill with religious rhetoric. The group appeals to individuals who want to believe in a coherent ideology that provides ready answers not only for spiritual questions, but also practical issues. HT's vision of a universal Islamic state also appeals to Central Asians who feel nostalgia for the loss of Soviet society, which theoretically promoted values of "solidarity" and "justice." There are widespread feelings of mistrust in the capability of Central Asian governments to cater to the citizens' needs. The application of Shari'ah, propagated by HT, promises to a fraction of the population a legitimate blueprint for a "just" society. Its radical calls to overthrow regimes through peaceful measures are well received by many people who, while rejecting violence as a method for political change, have lost hope in the Central Asian regimes' ability to reform themselves.

HT's emergence in Central Asia was initially an "Uzbek phenomenon." The early development of a mosque-centered faith in Uzbek-populated areas means that the local population is accustomed to thinking that Islam can provide solutions to problems. Since the late 1990s, however, HT succeeded in spreading its message throughout Central Asia. As a result, HT is the leading Islamist group in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with thousands of members in each country.¹³ These governments

have responded to the emergence of HT with repressive measures against its members and supporters. These punitive measures, however, are having the opposite effect: HT is growing in popularity, as can be measured by its ability to recruit across broad swathes of society, including students, businessmen, intellectuals and women. Only in Turkmenistan does HT have a minimal presence, which is probably due to severe state repression.

HT differs considerably from other clandestine Islamist groups when it comes to recruitment. The group welcomes as members both men and women. HT is more likely to use its female members for demonstrations and protests in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, based on the belief that security services in these countries are less likely to abuse them physically or arrest them. Also, HT has been active in recruiting prisoners in Central Asia. Jailed HT members propagate their ideology to fellow convicts who, due to the harsh prison conditions, are susceptible to Islamist messaging. This has become such a problem that in Uzbekistan, for example, authorities tend to isolate HT members from common prisoners.¹⁴

Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), HT has managed to establish a presence in the country. The first HT cells in Tajikistan were established by Uzbek citizens who moved into northern Tajikistan in the late 1990s. A rough estimate of HT membership in Tajikistan is about 3,000 members. In Kazakhstan, the first HT members appeared in 1998. As in Tajikistan, the first generation of members in southern Kazakhstan were ethnic Uzbeks. In recent years, however, a large number of members are ethnic Kazakhs. HT likely has about 2,000 members in Kazakhstan, mostly active in the south in areas such as Shymkent and Kentau. In Kyrgyzstan, HT is strong in the southern provinces of Osh, Jalal-Abad and Batken. According to security sources, there are around 4,000 HT members in Kyrgyzstan. These details are based on: "Hizb ut-Tahrir: Extremistskaya Organizatsiya," *Shyt* [Dushanbe], January 27, 2005; Personal interview, Igor Savin, director of NGO Dialogue, Shymkent, Kazakhstan, February 2004; Personal interview, Kazakh diplomat, Washington, D.C., September 2009; Personal interview, Kazakh security official, Astana, Kazakhstan, February 2009; Personal interview, Sadykdzhan Mahmudov, director of NGO Rays of Solomon, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, May 2004.

14 Personal interview, member of Hizb al-Tahrir, name withheld at request, Namangan, Uzbekistan, August 2005.

HT pursues a different strategy in each Central Asian country where it is active. In Uzbekistan, HT spreads its message clandestinely. In Kyrgyzstan, it takes advantage of the country's relatively relaxed political atmosphere to launch public relations campaigns. In Kazakhstan, HT is still growing its cadres while avoiding a confrontation with the authorities. In Tajikistan, HT chooses to confront both the authorities and the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, its main political competitor. While maintaining a coherent and concrete agenda, HT has tactically focused on each country's unique problems.

Prospects for the Future

HT does not constitute an immediate threat to the security of Central Asian states. Nevertheless, HT may in the medium- to long-term ally itself with radical elements within the security services or armed forces to overthrow one or more governments in the Central Asian region in line with the group's *nusra* strategy. HT's rejection of political violence is conditional on the prevailing political circumstances: when *nusra* is not an option, the group aims at the Islamization of society and the eventual peaceful overthrow of the regime.

Although HT cannot be classified as a terrorist organization, the political implications of its growing influence in the region are serious. The group constitutes an obstacle to the emergence of democracy in Central Asia, since its growing popularity has allowed regional leaders to solidify their positions and resist Western calls for political and economic reforms. Moreover, if HT were to collaborate with an armed force to establish an Islamic state in a country, its next goal would be to re-establish the Islamic caliphate, which would clearly set this new state up for conflict with its regional neighbors.

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13 Based on interviews with security officials and group members, as well as extrapolating from the number of arrested members in the country, the author estimates that there are around 10,000-15,000 members and many more sympathizers in Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, the majority of HT members appear to be from the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent—as assessed by the number of arrested members from these areas. In Tajikistan, despite the existence of a legal Islamic party, the Islamic Revival

How Terrorist Groups End

By Leonard Weinberg and Arie Perliger

THE CURRENT FIGHT against al-Qa`ida appears to have no end. Various tactics have been employed to defeat the terrorist group, including assassinating cell leaders and “re-educating” members. Yet the network persists and bombs continue to be detonated in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Yemen, among other countries.¹

To assess the future of Salafi-jihadi terrorism, it is important to take the history of modern terrorism into consideration. By examining the past, it is clear that almost all terrorist groups and all terrorist campaigns that appeared so menacing in previous decades have passed from the scene. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, for example, the public in much of the Western world was gripped by fear that anarchist bands posed a serious challenge to the prevailing social and political order.² Kings, presidents, government ministers, captains of industry and members of the general public were murdered with some frequency. The leading newspapers of the era stressed the extreme danger represented by anarchist conspirators. In the United States, the Sacco and Vanzetti case (two anarchists who were convicted and executed for murder and bank robbery in Massachusetts) probably received as much worldwide attention as have the detainees in Guantanamo Bay.³ Yet with the exception of a handful of eccentrics (such as the Unabomber), violent anarchism now seems a historical curiosity. In fact, by Audrey Cronin’s estimate, the lifespan of individual terrorist groups in general is on average (median) between five and ten years.⁴

While some groups pursued their aims through violence for decades—such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)—these seem to be exceptional cases. Other observers, such as David Rapoport, suggest the median duration of terrorist groups is only about one year.⁵

Yet are these figures irrelevant if the causes for which the terrorist group struggles persist? The Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria, for example, may have been beaten back by the authorities, but it was replaced by the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) which, in turn, gave rise to al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).⁶ According to Rapoport, these causes have come in a series of distinct “waves.” Since the advent of modern terrorism during the last third of the 19th century, he believes there have been four such waves. Anarchism was the dominant cause of the first. The pursuit of national independence defined the second, while left-wing revolutionary objectives of the 1960s and 1970s characterized the third. The world now faces a fourth wave whose *leitmotif* is religious revivalism, Islamism especially.⁷ Each of the previous three waves lasted about a generation, or 30-40 years, before receding. If this is true, is there any evidence to suggest the current wave of terrorism will last longer? This article addresses that question, first by calculating frequencies of how past terrorist groups have ended, and then examining whether al-Qa`ida-related terrorism is a unique phenomenon in the history of terrorism.

How Terrorist Groups End

How have terrorist groups ended in the past? Observers have tended to stress four general causes: external repression,

internal collapse, public rejection and success. With the exception of the latter, these causes are not mutually exclusive. One cause may, in reality, reinforce the other.

Through the work of Audrey Cronin, along with the authors’ own categories, it is possible to calculate the frequencies of how terrorist groups end, as seen in Table 1.

| Outcome | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Capture or killing of group leadership | 71 | 30.6% |
| Repression by the authorities | 51 | 21.9% |
| Group abandons terrorism in favor of non-violent tactics | 29 | 12.5% |
| Merger with another terrorist group | 28 | 12.1% |
| Group achieves its goals | 18 | 7.7% |
| Loss of public support | 10 | 4.3% |
| Internal ideological disputes and power struggles | 8 | 3.4% |
| Loss of state support (for groups that were state supported) | 8 | 3.4% |
| Failure to recruit a new generation | 6 | 2.5% |
| Group adopts other types of violence | 3 | 1.2% |

Table 1. How Terrorist Groups End.⁸

As depicted in Table 1, terrorist groups rarely achieve their goals. For instance, none of the “urban guerrilla” groups active in Europe and Latin America

1 Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Bruce Hoffman, “Al Qaeda Has a Plan — Where’s Ours?” *Washington Post*, January 15, 2010.

2 Pyotr Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt,” in Walter Laqueur ed., *The Terrorism Reader* (New York: New American Library, 1978).

3 Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

4 Audrey K. Cronin, *Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Policymakers from the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups*

(New York: Taylor and Francis, 2009). Cronin used data compiled by the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.

5 David Rapoport, “Terrorism,” in Mary Hawkeworth and Maurice Kogan ed., *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics, Volume 2* (London: Routledge, 1992).

6 Fawaz Gerges, “The Decline of Revolutionary Islam in Algeria and Egypt,” *Survival* 41:1 (1999): pp. 113-125.

7 David Rapoport, “The Fourth Wave: September 11 in the History of Terrorism,” *Current History* 100:650 (2001): pp. 419-429.

8 The table is based on a dataset that was constructed with information gathered from three well-known and reliable sources in the field of terrorism studies: 1) Alex P. Schmid and A.J. Jongman, *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature* (Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005); 2) The MIPT terrorism knowledge base; and 3) The U.S. Department of State’s Patterns of Global Terrorism Project. The dataset contains groups whose activities met four criteria, which are accepted by the academic community as describing terrorist activity: 1) The group’s activities included violent acts, 2) which were perpetrated in some type of political context, 3) included a symbolic or psychological effect geared toward influencing a wider audience than the immediate victims, and 4) were aimed against non-combatants or civilians. Based on these standards, the authors compiled a list of 430 political groups that warranted the “terrorist” label. Of these, a total of 232 are not active any more as terrorist groups. To detect exactly what led to the groups abandoning terrorism, the authors used governmental reports, court protocols, online and regular media resources, as well as academic books and articles.

during the 1960s and 1970s succeeded in igniting a revolution. None of the Palestinian groups, secular or religious (Fatah or Hamas), have achieved their ultimate aim of destroying Israel.⁹

Some groups have achieved their tactical goals. In Lebanon, Hizb Allah's precursors managed to persuade France and the United States to withdraw their forces from Beirut following a series of suicide bombings in 1983. About the same might be said in connection with Israel's decision to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. Although there are a handful of exceptions, the use of terrorism is not a successful means to achieve long-term goals.

Since failure is the most common result for terrorist groups, what are the alternatives their leaders confront once they realize this probability? One option is to abandon the gun for the ballot box. In some cases—such as the IRA and the Muslim Brotherhood—leaders make a “strategic decision” to enter negotiations with their adversaries and enter or re-enter the political arena. Rarer still are groups that manage to escalate their violence from terrorism to full-scale internal warfare. In Vietnam, the Viet Cong managed to transform their insurgency along these lines.

A number of variables measure the impact of internal group dynamics and terrorism's reception by the public. If taken together, the internal fragmentation of terrorist groups and their inability to pass their dreams to a new generation(s) of militants account for a relatively small number of outcomes. The same observation applies in the case of the groups' external environment. The loss of state support, as Libya used to provide, has rarely caused groups to end their careers. When a state ends support for a terrorist group, other sources of funding are pursued, such as private philanthropy and bank robbery. On a few occasions, public disapproval plays a significant role in ending the use of terrorist violence—such as with the Egyptian Islamic Group following

its bloody attack on tourists in Luxor.¹⁰ Nevertheless, at least in the short-run public opinion does not make a major contribution in the abandonment of terrorism. Terrorist groups are often able to insulate themselves from external realities, particularly if they regard themselves as acting in the name of God.

The most common single explanations for the end of terrorist group activity are repression by the authorities (military or police) and the arrest or killing of a group's leaders and top echelon. “Targeted killings,” by the Israeli government for example, or the arrest of such key terrorist luminaries as Abimael Guzman in Peru and Abdullah Ocalan in Turkey, have been criticized on the grounds that they only infuriate a group's members and cause them to escalate violence. Yet, there should be a distinction between motivation and capacity. The desire to raise the level of terrorism may increase in these instances, but the ability to do so declines. Terrorist groups are rarely democratic organizations. New leaders may not possess the skills or allure of their predecessors—as followers of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi in Iraq and Chechen followers of Shamil Basayev discovered. Although arresting a key figure is preferred, it is not always a possible outcome, especially when the individual prefers to die rather than surrender, or where the terrain is inaccessible to conventional law enforcement operations.

Repression certainly has its critics as well. In democracies, critics frequently object to repressive tactics on the grounds that they violate important constitutional safeguards both at home and abroad. Other critics stress the self-defeating nature of repression. Overly indiscriminate acts of repression by the police or military, especially foreign forces, act as recruiting tools for terrorists. This appears to be true in some cases, such as for Palestinian militant groups, but not others, such

as the Tupamaros in Uruguay.¹¹ In any event, repression is a common way by which terrorist groups come to an end.

Is Al-Qa`ida-led Terrorism Unique Historically?

There are three reasons why al-Qa`ida-led terrorism might differ from previous trends. First, unlike previous waves, the current one is to a large extent driven by religion. Religious beliefs often have the power to elicit powerful emotions usually unavailable to such secular causes as Marxism-Leninism and Maoism. Second, al-Qa`ida and its various components are part of a broad social and political Islamist movement, not an isolated band of fanatics detached physically and emotionally from the rest of society. Third, today's religious terrorists have access to the internet. No previous generation of terrorist groups had this tool available to publicize their perspectives to an attentive public, recruit followers and communicate with adherents on a worldwide basis.

These seem like exceptionally powerful factors. Yet there is another side to consider. Periods of intense religious excitement have come and gone over the centuries. During the 1880s, for example, a mahdi appeared in Sudan whose goals and those of his followers were to eliminate all Western influence from Muslim society.¹² Among East European Jews during the 18th century, Shabbetai Zevi was believed by his thousands of followers to be the messiah to lead the children of Israel back to the “Promised Land.”¹³ Over the course of its history, the United States has been the locale for multiple “Great Awakenings.”¹⁴ In all three instances,

11 Arturo Porzecanski, *Uruguay's Tupamaros* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973). The Tupamaros were an urban guerrilla group active in the late 1960s and early 1970s that sought to provoke the Uruguayan military into staging a crackdown and thereby disclose the repressive nature of the authorities in Montevideo. The masses would then become committed to the cause of revolution. The Tupamaros succeeded in provoking the military to stage a coup d'état. The result of the ensuing repression was the end of the Tupamaros. The country's masses remained largely indifferent to these occurrences.

12 Peter M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in Sudan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

13 Avraham Elqayam, “The Horizon of Reason: The Divine Madness of Sabbatai Sevi,” *Kabbalah* 9 (2003): pp. 7-61.

14 See, for example, Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectual-*

9 They have, however, achieved some level of political autonomy to the Palestinian population living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; whether these achievements are more a result of international diplomacy and foreign public opinion than terrorism is a matter of debate.

10 On November 17, 1997, members of the Islamic Group killed 62 people, mostly foreign tourists, visiting the ancient site of Luxor in Egypt. The group had hoped to weaken Egypt's economy by scaring away foreign tourists, but they succeeded instead in horrifying the Egyptian public. See Gilles Keppel, *Jihad* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap-Harvard, 2002), pp. 276-277.

these periods of religious excitement eventually dissipated.

The fact that al-Qa`ida is embedded in a broad movement does not make it immune to decline and defeat either. Mass protest movements typically have a beginning, middle and end. According to many of their observers, protest movements end when their “opportunity structure” narrows—that is, when the authorities become more effective in dealing with them and when the movements themselves become institutionalized as their leaders transform them into largely conventional political parties or similar organizations.¹⁵ The history of the Palestinian group Fatah could serve as an example, or the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt where they are now represented in their countries’ parliaments.

Another powerful factor possibly affecting longevity today is the impact of the internet. On the other hand, both Europe and North America abound with far right, racist and anti-Semitic groups that make extensive use of the internet in the hope of setting off a racial holy war and, in their minds, save the Aryan race from extinction. Yet despite a myriad of websites and chat rooms, no right-wing holy war appears imminent. In the absence of a critical mass of followers, the effect of the internet is distinctly limited and is a tool rather than a cause.

The Future of Al-Qa`ida?

When assessing the future of al-Qa`ida, no single factor seems likely to bring about its demise. It will likely take a combination of the items mentioned above. There are, however, some favorable signs. According to public opinion polls conducted by Pew and Gallup, al-Qa`ida enjoys declining levels of support among sampled respondents in the Middle East and South Asia, in Pakistan especially. Leading clerics have begun to preach that al-Qa`ida’s indiscriminate attacks against civilians, Muslims in particular, conflict with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad. Leadership decapitations appear to

have had some effect, rhetoric aside, in demoralizing key figures. Most of al-Qa`ida’s “nodes” in Southeast Asia, for example, have been eliminated.

None of al-Qa`ida’s ostensible goals have been achieved. Governments in Cairo, Riyadh and Amman continue to function. Jews and “Crusaders” are still present in the Middle East and elsewhere in the House of Islam. The prospects of al-Qa`ida creating a new caliphate remain in the realm of the fantastic. In short, while the end may not be near, it might not be far off either.

As a result, while no “silver bullet” will bring an end to al-Qa`ida, a combination of external pressure exerted by the relevant authorities and internal decay brought on by organizational woes should reduce the threat to a manageable level.¹⁶ What particular mix of “carrots” and “sticks” is most effective is likely to vary with the different national contexts in which the various al-Qa`ida components operate. As various U.S. political leaders have pointed out, the world is simply not going to move in the direction al-Qa`ida’s luminaries wish to take it.

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Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

January 1, 2010 (DENMARK): A Somali man broke into the home of Kurt Westergaard, the Danish cartoonist whose caricature of the Prophet Muhammad was published by *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005. The Somali man, who is a Danish resident, was carrying an axe and a knife, and Danish authorities claim that he was an assassin with links to the Somali insurgent and terrorist group al-Shabab. He was shot and wounded by police before he could reach Westergaard, who was home at the time. – *The Observer*, January 3; *AFP*, January 2; *New York Times*, January 3

January 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle amid a crowd of spectators watching a volleyball game in Lakki Marwat District of the North-West Frontier Province. The bombing killed 101 people. – *AFP*, January 3

January 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb killed five people, including an anti-Taliban tribal elder, in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The bomb was detonated remotely. – *AFP*, January 1

January 3, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed five alleged militants near Mir Ali in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *al-Jazeera*, January 4

January 6, 2010 (PAKISTAN): U.S. unmanned aerial drones targeted a Taliban training center in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing at least 13 militants. – *AFP*, January 6; *Washington Post*, January 7

January 6, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed four Pakistani soldiers in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. – *Dawn*, January 6

January 6, 2010 (RUSSIA): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed six police officers in Makhachkala, Dagestan. – *New York Times*, January 6

January 7, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 10 people in Gardez, the capital of Paktia Province. The target of the attack, pro-government militia

ism in American Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

15 On the concept and theories of “Political Opportunity Structure,” see Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

16 For a useful review of how past terrorist groups ended, see Robert Art, “Conclusion,” in Louise Richardson ed., *Democracy and Counterterrorism* (Washington, D.C.: USIP, 2007).

commander Nasir Paray, was killed in the blast. – *New York Times*, January 7

January 8, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Two alleged associates of Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan immigrant charged with plotting a series of bombings in New York, were arrested. The two men have been identified as Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin. – *AFP*, January 8

January 8, 2010 (PAKISTAN): An accidental explosion killed eight suspected militants at a safe house in Karachi. Authorities suspect that the explosives—which included suicide jackets—were being stored in the building for future terrorist attacks. The safe house was located in Baldia district, an area of Karachi that is primarily home to Pashtun migrants from Pakistan's northwest. – *Wall Street Journal*, January 8

January 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed at least four militants in Ismail Khel village, located in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. It is believed that the strike killed Jamal Saeed Abdul Rahim, wanted for his alleged role in the September 5, 1986 hijacking of Pan American World Airways Flight 73. – *AFP*, January 9; *AP*, January 15

January 10, 2010 (INDIA): Two alleged members of Lashkar-i-Tayyiba were killed by Indian Army troops in Reasi district of Indian-administered Kashmir. – *Indian Express*, January 11

January 13, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber blew up a truck outside a police station in Anbar Province, killing seven people. – *Reuters*, January 13

January 13, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni security forces killed a suspected al-Qa`ida leader and arrested four al-Qa`ida fighters in eastern Shabwa Province. The leader of the al-Qa`ida cell was identified as Abdullah Mehdar. – *Los Angeles Times*, January 14; *Voice of America*, January 13

January 14, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Tahawwur Hussain Rana was indicted by a U.S. grand jury for his alleged role in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India. Rana was charged with providing material support to both the Mumbai attacks and to Lashkar-i-Tayyiba, the Pakistani terrorist group believed responsible for the operation. Rana also

faces other charges, such as conspiring to attack a Danish newspaper for publishing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. – *National Post*, January 14

January 14, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a market in the Dehrawood district of Uruzgan Province, killing 20 civilians. – *New York Times*, January 14

January 14, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone targeted Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan leader Hakimullah Mehsud in South Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Approximately 10 people were killed in the attack. It is believed that Hakimullah Mehsud eventually died from injuries sustained in the strike. – *CNN*, January 15; *CNN*, February 9; *AP*, February 10

January 14, 2010 (JORDAN): A roadside bomb exploded next to a convoy of vehicles carrying Israeli diplomats in Jordan, yet there were no injuries. – *Wall Street Journal*, January 15

January 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed five people in Zarini village in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *CNN*, January 15

January 15, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni forces killed six alleged al-Qa`ida militants in an airstrike near the Saudi Arabian border. The airstrike targeted two vehicles on the border between the Yemeni provinces of Saada and al-Jawf. Authorities believe that Qasim al-Raymi, the military chief of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula, was among the dead. – *Washington Post*, January 16; *Voice of America*, January 15

January 16, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a military vehicle in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, wounding two soldiers. – *Reuters*, January 16

January 17, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed 15 people in the Shaktu area of South Waziristan Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The strikes targeted a compound owned by a member of the Mehsud tribe. – *New York Times*, January 17

January 18, 2010 (CANADA): Zakaria Amara, the ringleader of the so-called "Toronto 18" terrorist cell, was sentenced to life in prison. The 2006 plot involved

detonating truck bombs outside the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Toronto offices of Canada's spy agency, and an Ontario military base. The plot was disrupted by Canadian authorities. – *ABC News*, January 18

January 18, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters launched a coordinated attack in Kabul, setting off explosives and taking over buildings. Approximately 12 people were killed in the fighting, seven of whom were militants. – *Wall Street Journal*, January 18; *Los Angeles Times*, January 19

January 19, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suspected U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed five people in the Deegan area of North Waziristan Agency in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP*, January 19

January 21, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber blew up a truck near an Iraqi military base in Baaj, Ninawa Province. One Iraqi soldier was wounded. – *Reuters*, January 22

January 21, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani intelligence officials said that a U.S. unmanned aerial drone strike earlier in January killed Abdul Basit Usman, an alleged Abu Sayyaf Group demolition expert. Usman was captured by Philippine authorities in 2002, but managed to escape months later. He also was linked to Jemaah Islamiya. – *Philippine Inquirer*, January 23; *New York Times*, January 21

January 22, 2010 (IRAQ): U.S. military forces killed Abu Khalaf, identified as a senior al-Qa`ida operative and a facilitator for the transit of foreign fighters from Syria into Iraq. He was killed in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *UPI*, January 28

January 22, 2010 (TURKEY): In a major operation involving 16 provinces, Turkish police arrested 120 people with suspected ties to al-Qa`ida. – *Guardian*, January 22

January 23, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban militants attempted to kill the governor of Wardak Province by setting off a hidden bomb as he traveled to a school building inspection. The governor escaped injury, but four of his Afghan military guards were killed. – *New York Times*, January 23

January 23, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a police station in Gomal,

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located south of Tank in the North-West Frontier Province. At least five people were killed by the blast. – *RIA Novosti*, January 23

January 23, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban militants killed seven Pakistani tribesmen accused of spying for the United States. The killings occurred in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Reuters*, January 24

January 24, 2010 (GLOBAL): Usama bin Ladin purportedly released a new audiotape claiming credit for the December 25, 2009 attempted bombing of a commercial airliner in the United States. The statement read, “The message delivered to you through the plane of the heroic warrior Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was a confirmation of the previous messages sent by the heroes of the September 11. America will never dream of security unless we will have it in reality in Palestine. God willing, our raids on you will continue as long as your support for the Israelis continues.” – *BBC*, January 24; *Australian*, January 25

January 25, 2010 (IRAQ): Suicide bombers attacked three landmark hotels in Baghdad near-simultaneously, killing at least 36 people. The targeted hotels include the Sheraton, the Hamra, and the Babylon. The Islamic State of Iraq later claimed credit for the bombings. – *Los Angeles Times*, January 25; *Voice of America*, January 27

January 26, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A bomb exploded outside the main gate at Camp Phoenix, a U.S. military base on the outskirts of Kabul. There were no confirmed reports of fatalities, although Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid claimed that the bomb killed 25 soldiers. – *CNN*, January 26; *New York Times*, January 26

January 26, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle exploded outside the Iraqi Interior Ministry's forensics department in Baghdad, killing at least 18 people. – *Christian Science Monitor*, January 26

January 27, 2010 (PAKISTAN): The body of anti-Taliban militia leader Malik Manaris Khan was found in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Khan, who was kidnapped on January 25, had been shot to death. – *AFP*, January 27

January 27, 2010 (MALAYSIA): Authorities in Malaysia announced the detention of 10 people with suspected ties to international terrorist groups, including Jemaah Islamiya. Nine of the 10 detained individuals are foreigners. – *Reuters*, January 27

January 29, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban fighters, disguised in Afghan Army and police uniforms, launched an assault on United Nations and government buildings in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand Province. At least five militants were killed, along with one civilian. The attack was similar to the January 18 coordinated Taliban assault in Kabul. – *al-Jazeera*, January 30; *New York Times*, January 29

January 29, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. unmanned aerial drone killed five suspected militants in Muhammad Khel, located in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP*, January 29

January 30, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a restaurant in Samara, Salah al-Din Province, killing at least two people. The restaurant was reportedly popular among Iraqi police. – *Voice of America*, January 30

January 30, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber killed 16 people at a police checkpoint in Bajaur Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AP*, January 30

January 30, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni security forces detained an alleged al-Qa`ida militant wearing an explosives belt. Authorities charge that the man was planning a suicide bombing on “economic facilities” in Hadramawt. – *Reuters*, January 30

January 31, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani forces killed 15 Taliban militants in Bajaur Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The fighting erupted after Taliban fighters attacked a military checkpoint and convoy. – *Reuters*, February 1